

Overview of the New Jersey Judiciary's Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)

Language Services Section (LSS)
Administrative Office of the Courts
Trenton, New Jersey

Introduction

The Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is designed to elicit the full range of the candidate's ability to use the target language verbally, and to identify what the candidate can do with the language.

Who Should Take the Test?

The following interpreters are required to take this test:

1. Persons who are in the process of becoming registered court interpreters (i.e., interpreters in any language for which no court interpreting oral performance exam is available). This includes individuals who intend to work both in one or more languages for which there is a court interpreting performance examination and one or more languages for which there is no such exam. This group consists of candidates who become eligible to take this test when they have reached an appropriate score on the written test and have completed the one-day Orientation Seminar.
2. Persons who are already working as contract interpreters in a language for which there is no court interpreting oral performance exam and who wish to upgrade their classification level. This exam is one of the six criteria that drive the classification of interpreters described above. Interpreters who have never taken the exam but wish to upgrade their classification must take this exam in order to justify a higher classification.

How Does One Register for the OPI?

Candidates who work in a language for which there is no oral performance exam at all, who completed the written exam and the Orientation Seminar or who wish to upgrade their classification should register to take the OPI exam by ***MAILING the attached form and payment of \$60 per language to the address shown on the form. All testing is done on Friday mornings between 8:30 and 11:30 a.m. in Trenton only!***

Once we receive a request to take the OPI, we will make the necessary arrangements and notify the candidate of the date and time of their exam ***via e-mail***. Specific directions for getting to the test site will be provided upon request. ***Candidates who also need to take the Spoken English Test (SET) will be scheduled to take the SET immediately following the OPI*** ([Overview of the English Speaking Proficiency Test](#)).

What Should Candidates Bring with Them to the Test and How Should They Dress?

Some form of identification, preferably a photo ID of some kind, is the only thing candidates should bring with them. Candidates should dress comfortably and casually.

What Will the Test Process Be?

On the day of a candidate's test appointment, the major steps of the exam will be as follows:

1. A test proctor will find the candidate who will be waiting at a designated waiting area and escort them to an office where the test will be administered.
2. Once in the office, the test proctor will:
 - a. Verify the candidate's identification (unless the examinee is going right into this test immediately following the Spoken English Test);
 - b. Provide a brief overview of how the test will be administered; and
 - c. Give the candidate the opportunity to ask questions.
3. The candidate will dial the phone number given, enter the PIN number given, and will be connected to a live evaluator who is a native speaker of the target language.
4. After verifying the candidate's identity, the evaluator will conduct the test, which consists of a series of questions that are designed to elicit the full range of the candidate's ability to use the target language verbally, and to identify what the candidate can do with the language.
5. The candidate simply answers the questions presented, which are general in nature. *There is no right or wrong answer* – the evaluator is checking for what the candidate can do with the language and not judging the content of what is said (except where it pertains to demonstrating comprehension of the topic).
6. Upon completion of the exam, the candidate will be asked some background questions including native language, year born, and gender. These questions are **optional** and candidates are free to answer them if they wish, or decline.

What Should Candidates Keep in Mind While Taking the Test?

The test scores the performance based on the subcategories of communication, comprehension, grammar and vocabulary. Accordingly, candidates should speak in a steady and natural voice. Do not shout or yell.

How Long Is the Test?

The test itself takes about 15 minutes.

How Is the Test Graded?

The evaluator scores the performance on a scale of 1-12+, with 12+ being the highest.

How Are Candidates Notified of Their Scores?

As soon as LSS is notified of a candidate's score, a result letter will be sent, which should be within two weeks of candidate taking the OPI.

What Are the Scores Required for the Various Classification Levels?

The scores for each of the three levels of the Judiciary's classification system are as follows:

Registered-Conditional: 11
Registered-Journeyman: 12
Registered-Master: 12+

Anyone who scores below 11 has failed the exam. These individuals will not be eligible to become registered or work as contract interpreters.

Can Test Scores Be Appealed?

No, all scores are final.

How Often Can a Candidate Take and Retake the Test?

A candidate may take the test no more frequently than once every 12 months. There is no limit to the number of times the test may be retaken.



New Jersey Judiciary

Application to Take Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)

Please type or print legibly and return to address below along with **\$60 payment for each language**. All items are required. **Please check box below if you also need to take the Spoken English Test.**

Your **Full** Legal Name

☐ Mr. Last Name / Surname (provide both if applicable) First Name Middle Name
☐ Ms.
☐ Miss

Mailing Address

Street Apt. No City State Zip code + 4

Daytime Phone (If you have more than one, please list in priority order) E-mail address

Languages (other than English), you expect to interpret.

List your top three **Friday morning** dates to take the Oral Proficiency Test (**all testing done between 8:30 and 11:30 a.m.**). You will also be scheduled to take the Spoken English Test at the same time, if needed. **Confirmation of date/time will be sent via e-mail.**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Check all that apply

- ☐ I have read the [Overview of the English Speaking Proficiency Test](#) and [Overview of the Oral Proficiency Interview](#).
☐ I am a first-time candidate.
☐ I am a repeat candidate.
☐ Need to take the **Spoken English Test** also.

Affidavit: I hereby affirm that I will not copy, record, discuss, or in any way divulge any of the words or phrases of the test to anyone during the testing period or at any time thereafter and that I intend to work as a court interpreter in New Jersey.

Signature

Date

Mail completed application, with accompanying fee of \$60 per language made payable to **“Treasurer, State of New Jersey.”** The fee is payable by check, certified check or money order only. Checks must not be post-dated and will be deposited upon receipt. **Absolutely NO CASH will be accepted.**

Regular Mail (US Postal Service)
Language Services
Administrative Office of the Courts
PO Box 988
Trenton, NJ 08625-0988

Overnight/Express Mail
Language Services
Administrative Office of the Courts
Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex
25 Market Street
Trenton, NJ 08611 – 0988



ADA Accommodations: If you will require an accommodation when taking the test, please indicate your accommodation request here: